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ABSTRACT

Written and published by the students at Gary High School, Gary, Texas, "Loblolly Magazine" is published twice a year. Issues are frequently devoted to a distant theme. The theme of this issue, "East Texas Storytellers," attempts to capture some of the local color and regional history of eastern Texas. The first article, "Timothy Griffith, Master Story Teller," introduces Timothy Griffith who talks about life as he was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s. Mr. Griffith explains about digging wells, going on a fishing trip, his father, the Internal Revenue Service, feed sack clothing, raccoon hunting, and the Shawnee Creek. Concluding the volume is a collection of East Texas ghost stories. (BZ)

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# East Texas Storytellers

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# Story Teller

We discovered Timothy Griffith through our friend, Pamela Neal, of Huntington, Texas. Pamela's husband, Ray, and Timothy grew up together. She provided some of the stories and pictures. Then she arranged for us to interview Timothy Griffith and get even more stories. We found him to be a fascinating and friendly person. He has a great memory for detail, and is a natural born story teller. Here then, is Timothy Griffith and some of his tales.

I was born in Zavalla, Texas, in 1937, but never lived in Zavalla to any of my memory. I grew up half way between Zavalla and Huntington, at a place called Manning Cutoff, at a country store.

It was a so-called grocery store where they had everything from horse collars to hay and from baking soda to pinto beans. The major portion of the trade that was at this store were tenant farmers and cotton farmers, a thing that is no longer with us. The land is grown up and we have

got pine trees growing where many of us picked cotton.

I went to schcol at Huntington. It was probably one of the better schools of its day. What it might be now, I have no idea. In the late forties through the late fifties, schools commenced to consolidate and they moved the country school into Huntington. I can remember school buses being pulled down the main street of Huntington by tractors and mules because Main Street wasn't paved. Main Street was a mudhole. You coundn't get from one side to the other. After almost graduating from high school, I spent

Timothy Griffith

eight years in the Navy and never came back to East Texas to stay.

I moved to Baytown and I've been now in Baytown for approximately twenty years. I'm what's known as a shift worker, an operator in a chemical plant. It's a good life, but it's not an East Texas life. East Texas has the flavor of neighbors and pine trees. There's things in the country you don't find in the city. So, I guess, what I'm telling you is perhaps, maybe, one day my dream would be to return to East Texas and to relive all the things that we make up and lie about now.

To Dig A Well

To run out of water in East Texas was a thing of dread. The community water systems they now enjoy didn't come about until the late 1960's or early 1970's. Back in the old days you had a well or cistern. If you ran out of water in a cistern all you had to do was haul water until it rained. If a well went dry, it was a different problem. A well could be cleaned out most of the time and restored to good use. Sometimes the water table would drop causing the well to dry up and there wasn't anything that could be done about this particular situation.

The Montgomery's well went dry and had to be cleaned out. Pee Wee stood with one foot in the well bucket and held on to the well rope and Hobart lowered him down into the well. Hobart decided to have a little fun with him, so he would let him down real fast and stop him. That would bang Pee Wee up against the side of the well curb. He was hollering at Hobart to cut out that nonsense. Finally, Hobart lowered him to the bottom of the well. Pee Wee would shovel sand into the well bucket and Hobart would draw the sand out of the well and empty it onto the ground. They worked in the well several days, but no water returned to the well. Things were bad. A new

well would have to be dug.

In those days you didn't just dig a well. A well was about forty feet deep, so one had to make sure there was water there. To dig a hole, three or four feet across and forty feet deep, required a lot of work. So one wanted to make sure water was at the bottom when he got there. To know exactly where to dig a well you would need someone to dowse where and how deep the water was. Now in East Texas, these dowsers were called water witchers. There were many water witchers, but Progumsaw Haney was the best. You didn't argue with a water witcher unless he was proven wrong. Progumsaw had never missed water and it had always been where he said it would be.

Silas sent Hobart to get Progumsaw to come and divine him a well. Now Progumsaw didn't take no money for divining a well. However, he could be persuaded to accept four or five chickens, a mess of roasting ears, a bushel of peas, and maybe a watermelon or two. Now I'm not one to argue with Progumsaw's ability, but I will quarantee the fact, that the more you persuaded him to accept, the closer to the house your well would be. It also worked in direct proportion of how long it took him if he thought he might get fed dinner. If no smells were coming from the kitchen and nothing more had been offered than a couple of chickens, you would have a well located in less than thirty minutes and probably three hundred yards from the house. Silas sending Hobart after Progumsaw may account for the fact that the well ended up in the middle of the calf pasture at least one hundred yards from the house. When Silas sent Hobart he told him everything to offer Progumsaw, but by the time he got there he had forgotten half of what papa had told him. In fact, he was doing good just to remember what he went for and after who. All that Hobart told Progumsaw was, Papa needs a well and he has some chickens, fresh Irish potatoes, and maybe

something from the garden. What Hobart was supposed to have remembered was: five chickens, a mess of everything that was in the garden, and three watermelons when they get ripe. Progumsaw liked later payments, especially watermelons. At this price they should have been able to stand on the back porch and draw water. Did your curiosity ever give you cause to wonder where the word Progumsaw came from, if it can be a word. Well, Progumsaw was setting in front of the Manning Cutoff Store one day, and he made the statement that he was a prognosticator. Nobody there had ever heard that word before so he commenced trying to explain that he could fortell the signs and that was one of the reasons he was so good at water witching. Then he had to explain fortell, so he finally told them he could see things and the signs of the times. A prognosticator was somebody that saw the program. By the time Hobart got that word home it was programsawer. He eventually became Progumsaw because he sort of like the sound of it and he arranged the spelling to suit himself. Progumsaw was greeted by Silas, and they sat on the front porch steps and discussed how fine the crops looked this year. Progumsaw kept talking about the peas and the corn and about how nice they looked and how much he liked them. Silas was agreeing with him all the way because he had promised him some of all of it, but Progumsaw didn't get all the information from Hobart.

Progumsaw got out his forked peach limb and started around the house divining for water. The peach fork would quiver and point towards the ground and he would watch Silas and ask again about the corn and the peas. Silas would just smile with the satisfaction of how well he was rewarding him and believing he would get a nice well close to the house. Progumsaw gave Silas every chance he could without coming right out and asking, which was highly against his principal. After receiving no assurance, the peach fork

commenced to shake at a point away from the house. Progumsaw followed the peach fork nearly one hundred yards from the house and right smack dab in the middle of the calf pasture. He made one more inquiry of the peas and the corn, and not receiving the answer he wanted, the peach fork quivered mightily and pointed straight at the ground. Silas had great difficulty understanding why his well was in the middle of the calf pasture after all the things he promised Progumsaw. Oh well, maybe that was the only place there really was dependable water. After all the well close to the house had went dry. Progumsaw marked the spot where the well was to be dug and Silas started gathering up Progumsaw's bounty, which somewhat surprised Progumsaw. It soon became apparent that Hobart had not told him everything that he was supposed to. However, there was no way that Progumsaw could change his location. That would ruin his reputation. So Silas was stuck with a well in the middle of the calf pasture. Hobart and Pee Wee were put to work digging the new well. Three poles were set upon a tripod to haul the dirt out of the hole in a five gallon bucket.

Now for all of y'all who don't know what a calf pasture is, it is usually a small patch of land near the house or barn, two or three acres in size, and the calves are kept in the pasture during the day so the milk cows will have milk at the end of the day. Cows and calves were often kept in this small pasture at night. In the Montgomery's calf pasture, also lived a blind mule that wore a bell. If this blind mule was turned into the big pasture he would get lost, and a bell was kept on the mule so he could be found.

After the well got too deep to throw the dirt out with a shovel, Pee Wee did most of the digging and Hobart stood on the top. He drew out the dirt, and kept the blind mule from falling in the well. Now this well had to be dug the forty feet deep so it took several days. The well was down to twenty feet and Pee Wee had managed to get

Hobart in the hole. He didn't dig very much, but he gave Pee Wee a rest from the confines of the hot hole. After digging for a while Hobart hollered up at Pee Wee to send down the water jug. "Ain't no water. The jug is empty." "Alright, you drunk all that water and I'm down here digging and it's hot and I want a drink. You just get yourself up to the house and fill that jug. I'm thirsty and I want some water." Now Pee Wee took the jug to the house and filled it. As he started back to the well he noticed a cowbell hanging on the backyard gate. He took the bell and walked across the cow pasture. Ever few steps he would ring the bell a couple of times, take a few more steps, and ca-lang-a-lang he'd ring the bell again. A shovel flew straight up out of the well followed by a wo-mule-wo! Pee Wee stopped a few seconds, standing very still and not ringing the bell. He could hear Hobart mumbling, trying to figure out how to drive that mule away from the well. Hobart hollered up out of the well, "Get up mule", and Pee Wee started walking and swinging the bell. "Gee mule", and Pee Wee turned to the right and walked a few steps and by this time Hobart was feeling fine. He'd drive the mule to the other end of the pasture. Pee Wee eased up close to the hole and rang the bell hard and fast. "Wo-mule-wo! Back-mule-back!" Pee Wee let Hobart drive him back. He had almost succeeded in driving the mule away, but Pee Wee would break and run a circle around the hole. The mule was almost driven from Hobart's hearing when Pee Wee turned and ran towards the well ringing the bell, loud and often. As Pee Wee approached the well, Hobart made one last desperate effort to drive the mule away , but Pee Wee kept coming. "Wo-mule-wo! Back-mule-back! Wo! Lord have mercy on me! What am I going to do with a mule down here in this hole?"

A Fishing Trip

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At the end of the tenth grade there were four or five of us that would get up a fishing trip, which was usually the highlight of the whole summer. A fishing trip usually consisted of a week on the river, a bunch of teenage boys, and I'm talking about thirteen year olds, teenagers, and up on to whoever was too lazy to hold a job and go with us. No limit on the age, but normally thirteen was the youngest. I believe it was after graduation ceremonies, the year that Ray and I were in the tenth grade. Ray Neal, James Hazard, Jesse Hazard, and I were all going to go to the bar pits near Saren, on the Neches River in a Model A Ford. We had this Model A Ford loaded. Somewhere along the line this Model A Ford used to have a rumble seat in it, but the rumble seat had been taken out and a small bed had been put on the back of this Model A. We had it all loaded down and were going to go to the river and stay a week. When you left Highway 69 at Manning Cutoff headed towards Shawnee Prairie, Wolf Hill, and Saren, there was about three or four miles of good paved road that became dirt road. This dirt road would get ruts in it in wet weather. The ruts would be a foot and a half to two feet wide and a foot deep. The trick was to drive straddle to one of these ruts after the ground had got hard. We left Huntington about 10:30 or 11:00 and it's probably fifteen miles to the bar pits. Now of that fifteen miles, eight miles of it is paved road and the rest of it is the dirt road with the ruts in it. We got to the end of the paved road and we hit the dirt road and had to slow down. Didn't know about these things in those days, but evidently batteries had a great effect on how a Model A ran. When we hit the dirt road we had to go slow. It wasn't turning the generator on that thing fast enough to make that Model A run good. About the time we got to the top of Wolf Hill we didn't have any headlights. I got real brave and I got a 3-celled flashlight. They must have been able to see better than I could because we were

running thirty to thirty five miles an hour and a Model A won't do much more than that on smooth ground. We'd hit another bump and the hood would fly up and I'd slap it down. We'd hit another bump and I'd fly up and there wasn't nobody up there to slap me down. So we proceeded on like this about another thirty minutes and the 3-celled flashlight went out. But that wasn't the bad part, it started raining. And when it rained you couldn't get over them ruts. It started raining and that Model A slid off of the topside and went down in the hollow, and got down in them ruts. It wasn't long until we couldn't see. It was raining, and four people wouldn't fit in the cab of the Model A 'cause we had our bed roles in there trying to keep them dry. Finally we stopped at the foot of Wolf Hill, and we drug that Model A, literally drug it, out of the ruts, got it over in the road ditch, and we camped on the side of the road at Saren that night in the rain. That's probably one of the most miserable nights I've ever spent in my life. We felt so good about that trip. The next morning was Saturday morning. We got up and we got that thing turned around and we finally found enough dry newspaper that we could spread across the engine and set on fire to dry the engine out enough to get it to crank. We got the engine running again on that Model A and it's about five or six miles now back to the pavement. We left about daylight. About five o'clock that evening we got to the pavement. Now there was a considerable amount of pushing and I think there was a lot of new words experienced, learned, in the mud trying to get that Model A to the pavement. That's probably one of the shortest fishing trips we've ever went on and the hook didn't even get set.

Pshaw Man

My stepdad was John Thomas. He had several nicknames, one of them being Dirty Buddy. I don't

know particularly where the word came from, don't really care. We called him Pshaw Man. He was an approximate thirty years older than my mother. So compared to a lot of things someone my age normally hears, I've heard a lot older tales then most people because he was so much older. He ran a store all of his life. He ran a store for two different places for roughly twenty five years in each place.

Most places in those days had no electricity. We did have electricity because we lived on the main road and if you lived out on what was known as Highway 69 you did have electricity. If you didn't, for instance, where we set now, electricity was probably fifteen to twenty years behind. When it went down Highway 69 you had Texas Power and Light. When it finally came to the so-called rural area it was REA and it may still be what they have here today. I don't know what they have here today. But we had electricity and things that I can remember is Saturday nights and The Grand Old Opry. We would drag a radio out on the front of the store which was referred as out on the front. The Grand Old Opry would be put on the radio and I didn't know it then, but I guess it was a selling item that the old man had, to draw a crowd at the store on Saturday night. Most of our trade was Black. But segregation was a real strict thing in those days. One of the things that I can remember distinctly though is his desire to make a dollar. He was not prejudiced 'cause a Black man's dollar is as big as a White man's dollar. So he treated everyone the same. When you came to hear The Grand Old Opry, well there was no front seat or back seat with him on that account. Now what his personal feelings were after that I don't know, but he liked the dollar better than he did being prejudiced. So, we'd have a gang there most Saturday nights to hear The Grand Old Opry, a simple fact that most people's radios were battery radios. And to play the radio with the battery,

those batteries were extremely expensive compared with the income that a person had at that time. And the radio was mainly used to hear the news and things of importance on, instead of trying to hear The Grand Old Opry. So we had an electric radio that was the same at all times. So they would gang up at the store and listen to The Grand Old Opry on Saturday nights. A few times I can remember when they would have a world championship boxing match between Joe Louis and whoever might be trying to dethrone him. That would draw the biggest crowd at that store on fight night when usually it was Saturday night it would happen somewhere. That would draw the biggest crowds that I can remember being at that little store. I guess we always remember things bigger than they really were, but the little old store was big in country store sizes. Yet compared to today's supermarkets you can set the whole store in the produce section and have room left over. I grew up in that country grocery store dealing with White people, Black people, and the likes. They were just people most of the time.

Soda water was a nickel. Soda water was a word if you go in now and ask for a soda water they think you are either mighty dumb or a hick. They had never heard of the word. Bread was sold unwrapped and uncut. A loaf of bread was a loaf of bread. We sold bacon in that store and if we had to operate on today's standards, they'd shut it down. They'd close it up, the health department would not let it run. I have seen a rag dipped in vinegar, and they would take this rag and wipe down sticks of bologna and slabs of bacon to get the mold off of them. If you were to walk in a store today and order a pound of bologna and they'd lay it up on the counter and take a rag and dip it in vinegar and wipe the mold off of it you'd walk out. You wouldn't have it, but it happened. It happened everywhere then so no one thought anything about it. It was the way life was conducted.

John Thomas was a little, short, heavy set man. You usually had two feelings about him. You either liked him very much or hated him very deep. There was hardly any in between on him. When I was growing up I thought he was dumb. After I got grown I wished I knew everything that he knew and I'd be in pretty good shape myself. He was an old man that had been born a few hundred years too late. He was a horse and buggy type that never did adapt to the automobile too well.

Most of the people that traded with us had a credit book. They'd come and buy their groceries on credit and had a book all their own. It had their name on it. These were tenant farmers that were working for someone else. They didn't own the land they were living on. They'd buy their groceries. Usually we let them charge their groceries for a period of nine months. Whoever's place they were living on would guarantee their credit. They'd sign an agreement that these tenant farmers could buy, for instance, probably fifty dollars worth of groceries a month which would be the maximum that they could buy. The land owner would stand good for the fifty dollars. If they spent over fifty dollars, then it was Pshaw Man's problem if they didn't pay. I know at the end of that time the two people that didn't pay. One man died owing him $12.00 and the other one was just too sorry to pay. The people in those days paid their debts.

I've seen the people start getting their cotton out and haul it to a gin, in a wagon, pulled by mules. Usually by the time they got their third or fourth bale of cotton out they would start getting money themselves. Up until then the landowner was getting it. Then they'd start paying their grocery bill. They'd usually owe anywhere from $250 to $300 worth of groceries that they had bought through the year. They got that paid off and if they were lucky they might get a job in a sawmill in the winter months. If they didn't get a job in a sawmill cutting

pulpwood, or making crossties during the winter months, by Christmas they were back on the books, buying groceries on credit again. We had one family in particular that always paid their bill and they weren't farmers. They worked at Lufkin Foundry in Lufkin. They bought tremendous amounts of groceries there and paid their bill once a month. There was a huge family that wouldn't pay their bill. They finally came after groceries and Pshaw Man told them they couldn't have any more groceries until they paid their bill. They would go to Huntington and start buying their groceries up there. Soon as they would do that, Pshaw Man would get a gun he kept, and he would get him some cash money and put it in his pocket and put that gun in his hip pocket and go to the gate of Lufkin Foundry. When this guy would come out of the gate, he would take that guy's check and he would cash it for him and he would keep half of it and give him the rest of it back in money. Ever how long it took, ever how many trips it took to do that to get ever how much he was owed, he would get his money and they would get paid up. It would make them people so mad. Just as soon as they got that paid off, they'd be back next week wanting them groceries on a credit again. It was just something that you knew was going to happen. The great part of the whole story is the gun he was toting wouldn't shoot so he wasn't going to kill nobody no way.

Trouble With the IRS

I don't remember when income tax came into being, but at some point or another Uncle Sam decided that everybody was going to have to pay income tax. In these days there were no sales tax, and Pshaw Man's bookkeeping abilities were carried out on the back of envelopes and used paper sacks and stuffed in shoe boxes somewhere. He figured his money different than the way everybody figured their's. The amount of money he

made in a year was determined by how much he had left over at the end of the year. Whatever you spent through the year to buy groceries, shoes, gasoline, or whatever, that wasn't money earned that was a necessity. If you went through the year and you made three or four thousand dollars, but come December the 31st you had three hundred dollars left, he figured that was how much money you made that year. That is what he was willing to pay taxes on. For some strange reason the IRS did not agree with him. So they came down one time and there was three of them showed up with their adding machines no less, and they were going to do an audit on that store to figure how much tax he had beat them out of and how much he owed. They came down there and he was very cooperative with them. He did not argue with them a bit. They'd ask him a question or they'd want a set of figures, he'd reach back and get a shoe box and he'd shuffle through it and he'd hand them a paper sack. It might have two dozen numbers wrote down on it, but, of course, you couldn't read his writing no way. If you misspelled his name by one number he couldn't read it no how. He had all of his information down and they'd ask for it and he'd give it to them on an envelope, shoe box, or paper sack and they worked there for three weeks. Finally at the end of three weeks they made him promise that if he'd do better next year they'd just drop the whole mess. They wouldn't pursue that any further because they knew less when they left than they did when they got there. They made him promise he would pay income tax on all the dollars he made in that year, instead of what he had left over. They went to great detail in trying to explain the difference between a savings account and a checking account to him. He may have believed them, but he didn't agree with them.

Lemonade and Feed Sacks

Most of our trade consisted of the Black

people. They had a church about one hundred yards behind the store. Church would start around eight or nine o'clock in the morning and it would last until whatever time it took to get from the church to home before dark. So in the winter time they'd have church from nine or ten o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the evening. In the summer time when the sun shines late, well, they would have church until seven-thirty or eight o'clock. It was just long enough for them to be able to get home with the wagon and team before dark. A few people had automobiles, but the major portion of them were coming to church in a wagon with a team. Most of the boys had bicycles. Sunday was a big trade day for candy, soda pop, and ice cream. "Pshaw Man" would get out a thirty gallon wooden keg and make thirty gallons of lemonade. Soda pop cost a nickel. A soda water bottle full of lemonade cost three cents or two bottles for a nickel. This thirty gallon keg had a wooden spigot on it. You would go get you a soda pop bottle that was empty, take it out there and dip it in a rain barrel that was under the eve of the house and got it full of water. This rain barrel was out there to put water in radiators on cars and horses took a drink out of it now and then. It wasn't too clean, but that's where you washed your bottle out for your lemonade. These people would go down and they'd have church for a couple of hours and they'd break for lunch and come up and they'd eat Moon Pies, sardines, cheese, and soda water.

"Pshaw Man" had a knack for stirring things up. There were two three of those old boys that were as big as the side of the house. They had bicycles and our store was at the foot of the hill. The top of that hill was almost a half a mile, and he'd put up fifty cents for bicycle races between these boys. He wouldn't let everybody run at one time or it would be all over with. You let them run two or three at a time. There's liable to be fifteen or twenty boys, so he

would run two or three at a time to prolong it. Well, to keep winning, if you won the first race you may have to win ten more races to win that fifty cents. What he was doing, he would run them up and down that hill and by the time he gave that fifty cents away they'd done bought $3.00 worth of soda pop and lemonade and he'd done got his fifty cents back anyway. I guess this store was probably a cultural center for some people. I have got a pair of scales I kept from that store that will weigh up to ten pounds on the first circle, then after the scales keep going you have to add the number of times it went past zero. We'd weigh on those scales everything that was to be weighed to go through a store from rice, beans, and butter, or whatever. We'd weigh them across those scales.

Back then it was nothing unusual for anyone to be born at home. When someone would have a child born it may be a month before he got to where they felt it was safe to bring a kid out, but after a while, sooner or later, they'd bring that kid up to the store and stick it up on those scales and see how much that kid weighed. If they ever got a birth certificate that is what they'd put on the birth certificate for what the kid weighed when he was born. Sometimes a kid a month old might have done gained two or three pounds so a lot of people born have got the wrong weight on their birth certificate. In that little old country store we sold feed, and cow feed and horse feed came in print sacks. We'd get these print sacks. And when you'd buy cow feed they either had a red print or a blue print. And if you bought cow feed and got a red print, well then, the next sack you were going to get may be a month down the road. But you'd make sure the Pshaw Man knew you wanted a red sack the next time because you wanted at least four sacks to make a dress and two sacks to make a shirt. Half of the shirts I grew up in were made out of feed sacks and what used to make me feel good was to go to school and

see someone with a shirt on just like mine that had J. C. Penny wrote across the back of the collar. My mother could sew read well and I can remember a lot of occasions she'd take a liking to some girl in the neighborhood that didn't have a dress that was very nice at all. And she'd tell this particular girl to save her sacks up and bring them to her and then they'd sit down together and she'd make them a dress and put all the frilly lace and a big collar on it. I didn't think anything about it because she was my mother and she sewed. But to a lot of the girls that was a big thing to get a new dress and the fact it was made out of a feed sack didn't quite enter into it because everybody was poor and no one knew it.

Coon Hunting

I hadn't been coon hunting since I was a kid and it's been at least twenty years since I was a kid. The coon hunting we did as kids wasn't very serious hunting. It's somewhat difficult to coon hunt without a good coon dog, and we wouldn't have known a good coon dog if we had looked one in the eye.

To get through the preamble of this great story, I was back home in East Texas visiting my folks when one of my old coon hunting buddies came by and invited me to go coon hunting with him. Remembering back to our boyhood, I had to admit he did have one of the better coon dogs. Why, sometimes when he treed, we would even find a coon.

Looking back on all the great times we had hunting as kids just wasn't enough to convince me that I should go coon hunting again. My buddy, Ray Neal, told me about the fine dogs he had and how many trophies he had won with his top dog, King. He had them loaded in the back of his Ford Bronco, and asked me to just come take a look at them.

Out of respect for the lifelong friendship, I went out and looked at Ray's dogs. Now to me they were just dogs, and three dogs in the small confines of the back of a Ford Bronco. They even

smelled like dogs. There were three of them, a treeing walker, a blue tick, and King, the mighty black and tan. Ray later explained to me that King was one quarter cur dog, for reasons I have yet to understand. After much explaining and personal observation, I have decided the best way to describe a good coon dog is one that trees coons. It doesn't matter to me what breed or background. The best dog is the one that gets the coon. I may not be a good judge of coon dogs either.

Finally, I agreed to go along on this coon hunt if for no other reason than to preserve this lifelong friendship with Ray and thinking it might be a good experience for my thirteen-year-old son, Don. When you go visit your mother, you just aren't always dressed for a coon hunt, so I borrowed a pair of striped overhauls and a pair of brogan shoes, both of which were just a tad too small. This later proved to somewhat of a handicap to my walking.

Don, Ray, Mike (Ray's 8-year-old son) and I headed into the Bronco and started out. Ray decided that since Don was a teenager, he might enjoy it better if another teenager was along. Ray had a coon hunting buddy who had a son the same age as Don who liked to go coon hunting, so we would go by and pick him up. The lad's name was John Page, and he later proved to be quite an asset to coon hunting.

When we reached the Page residence, they had company, lots of company, and they all decided a coon hunt was the best idea to be brought forth for the night. After introductions, none of which I remember except John, and an hour's preparation, we were on our way. There were four grown men, five boys, and six of the dogs were in the back of the pickup. And I had one of the two bucket seats in the Bronco all to myself.

It's approximately twenty miles from town to the Neches River bottom; five miles of good paved road that soon turned into bad muddy dirt road. I could tell right off that it had been raining a

whole bunch in East Texas that fall. It wasn't long before the pickup was having trouble getting through the mud. The headlights of the pickup were barely visible behind us when Ray decided that muddy road was bad, but backing up a quarter of a mile was nothing less than terrible.

After much deliberation, it was decided that the best thing to do was put a tow chain on the pickup and proceed as scheduled. Ray drug about forty feet of chain out of the back of the Bronco and hooked onto the pickup. I commented that forty feed of chain seemed a little bit long and received the answer..."I don't want him to pull me in the ditch if he happens to slide off the road." Ray put the Bronco in four-wheel drive and we were on our way again at the fast pace of ten miles an hour. It was amazing to me that we were moving at all. That pickup was in the ditch more than it was in the road. No one was getting upset and it wasn't my pickup getting the undersides drug through the mud, plus the fact that I was riding in the Bronco, so I was quite calm myself.

Several miles later we arrived at the pasture gate where we had permission to hunt. While I was unlocking the gate, a discussion arose, but I never was sure what it was about. It seems all six of them dogs knew it was getting close to coon hunting time and they all started tuning up in anticipation of the coming event. With the dogs howling and people shouting to be heard over the noise, I decided I would stand by my duty as gate opener.

The first mistake I made that night was deciding to go coon hunting. The second was standing by my duty as gate opener. Boys, dogs, and men got out of the pickup and into the Bronco. I think that discussion was whether or not that pickup would make it over that log road through the pasture. The answer became apparent when I tried to regain my seat in the Bronco. Eight people and six dogs completely fill up a Bronco. There were two people sitting in my seat and I think a dog was between them.

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There was number nine, feeling if not unwanted at least deserted, standing on the outside looking in. I don't claim to be any kind of an expert on the mechanics of any vehicle, but if there is anything you would like to know on the seating arrangement of a Bronco, I feel fully qualified, after seeing eight people and six dogs get in that one.

Not to be outdone and surely not to be left at the gate, I calmly closed the door, walked around the front of that Bronco, crawled up on the hood, and set down. I propped my feet on the two little wood blocks that were bolted on the front of the hood, reached behind me and grabbed a windshield wiper in each hand, and hollered, "roll `em out!" I ought not have hollered; that Bronco lunged into motion and we hit the first mud hole. Water and mud flew to both sides of that Bronco and as fear will, fear rose up in my throat, and then I couldn't holler. I thought the dirt road had mud holes, but these were some real mud holes on that log road. I have fished in places that weren't as big as some of those mud holes.

When we came through the gate, I happened to notice a sign that said, "This is a controlled forest." The last cutting was in 1949. I bring this up so you can recognize that this so-called log road had been without repair since 1949.

While riding the hood of that Bronco through those mud holes, it came to me that whoever named that vehicle Bronco knew more than meets the eye. There could not be a wild bronc anywhere that is harder to stay on than the hood of that Bronco. As bad as it may sound, I still had the best seat under the circumstances, for there were terrible sounds coming from within. The hood of that Bronco has almost as many square feet as the whole inside of the Bronco, and eight people and six dogs were scratching and fighting for a place to sit. Dogs hollered and boys screamed and at one point, a dog screamed. I truly believe John Page bit Blue Boy. Before this night was over, I would become to feel

inferior to this boy. I think even the dogs felt inferior to him a time or two.

There were screams from Ray that he couldn't see how to drive because I was blocking his view. When you are riding the hood of a Bronco, you can't worry where you are on the hood, just as long as you are on the hood. Just because you block the view on the driver's side matters little when you are trying to regain hand holds and foot holds as that thing leaned, shifted and banged through the next mud hole.

Finally we arrived, and the reason we had arrived is that so-called log road got worse, if that was possible. A four-wheel drive Bronco couldn't make it any farther, yet I was expected to walk through that swamp. I was not only expected to walk through it, I was expected to be able to keep up with six coon hounds.

People and dogs started unloading out of that Bronco. The dogs were excited and anxious to hunt, and they were soon gone from sight. Everyone was making final preparations for the hunt, adjusting boot straps and putting on headlights of several varieties. I'm still sitting in the middle of the hood on the Bronco, waiting for someone to hand me a headlight. No one gave me a headlight; they didn't give me any kind of light.

My third mistake of the night was leaving the Bronco without a light. A swamp lay ahead of me and I had no light. All sorts of brush, brambles and trees grew out of this swamp. There seemed to be about two or three inches of water everywhere. Some type of big leaf plant grew on the water. It wasn't a lily pad; they require a cleaner environment. Although I never saw one, I had the weird feeling there was a huge cottonmouth moccasin under every one one of these big leaves. All I had to do was figure out where to step without disturbing one of these serpents. As I got down off the Bronco and my brogans slowly sunk down in the quagmire, I discovered they were definitely not hightopped enough for coon hunting. Water ran

right over the tops and filled my shoes.

Before we had left the Bronco, the dogs had started barking on a trail and that started the first argument. Everybody wanted to start out after the dogs, but Ray said it was just ol' Blue Boy and he was still just a pup. I would have figured a ninety-pound dog full grown, whether he was a year old or not. The men started in with what I suppose was coon hunter's talk.

If the older dogs, mainly King and one named Rambler, honored Blue Boy's strike, it might amount to something. Shortly, King started barking and Ray said he was calling. King had opened on the strike. It wasn't long until all six dogs were running and barking. I'll have to admit it did have an air of thrilling excitement to listen to the dogs run. There were arguments of whose dog was leading the pack. When six dogs are running in the dead of the night, several hundred yards ahead of everybody, I found it difficult to tell who was leading the pack. At one point it was finally agreed that Rambler and King were bumping heads. At this comment, my son asked me why they were bumping heads. I told him to just hush and listen to them dogs make sweet music. I think that was the only thing I said all night that was right.

Don, being a city boy, didn't know this coon hunter jargon, so John Page started to interpret for him. I stayed as close to John as I could the rest of the night, just in case he might explain something I hadn't heard before. I heard explanations of popups, lay ups, limbing out, and trailing trash. I found out hounds can be pinched-mouthed, cold-nosed -- and there's yodelers, bawlers, and squealers. They can run tight and tree on a tap. Treeing on a tap was definitely bad, and a good dog would check out a tree. It's a must that a good coon dog have a changeover from a trail bark to a tree bark. A seasoned dog is never under any circumstances to leave a tree until the coon is brought out or he is told to go get another one.

The first race lasted about forty-five minutes, while we followed along behind and they treed. Even I could tell when they treed. The trail bawl changed to a yaw-yaw sort of tree bark. The pace picked up to get to the tree before the coon limbed out. We arrived at the tree to discover it was just on the other side of a sawmill slough, which was about twenty feet wide. There was a big foot log right there just as handy as a bridge. It was about the size of your standard telephone pole and just as smooth. Everybody lightfooted right across that footing with no trouble, except me. Now you got to remember, I'm the one without a light, and everybody crossed ahead of me, depositing a fair amount of mud on an already wet, slick footing. About halfway across that log, sliding one foot ahead of the other, I was feeling real proud of my progress. With no light and a pair of brogans that were too small, I was still high and dry.

At this point, somebody remembered I didn't have a light and everybody came to my rescue with a beam of light. Everything from a three cell flashlight to a powerful beam powered by a twelve volt motorcycle battery hit me right in the eye. My next step, with a splash, put me right in the middle of the sawmill slough. It was only waist deep, but somewhat cold. I gathered all the poise and dignity one can standing in the middle of a sawmill slough, and waded ashore. There was some laughing and snickers coming from the crowd on the bank, but I couldn't tell for sure who it was, with all that light in my face. John Page did step down and give me a hand up the slick bank, and I was grateful for that.

To restore a little order, I calmly asked had anyone located the coon, and all attention turned to the tree. With all those lights shining up that tree, you could have located a June bug. Anything as big as a coon had no chance of hiding. It was in the very top of the tree looking down at us. I kept waiting for someone to shoot the coon, but all

I heard was discussion over the finer points of the dogs barking up that tree, and that we had looked at the coon. They didn't have any ideas of shooting that coon.

I had an unbelievable ride on a Bronco, walked through a swamp, fell in a sawmill slough and got my striped overhauls wet. They were too little to start with, and they were now eating on me in places I won't mention. After enduring all this, I was to look at a coon and walk off and leave him. I just wasn't about to agree to that.

I believe when one shoots any kind of animal, one should eat said game animal or give it to someone that will. I'm very fond of barbecued coon and I wanted that coon to compensate for some of the misery I had already encountered.

I made my fourth mistake of the night when I told them I wanted that coon. After assuring them I wouldn't get tired of carrying it and that I wouldn't abandon it, they agreed to kill the coon. I figured a good clean shot to the head would end it all, but I figured wrong. Since we would take the coon, we may as well enjoy a good fight. All dogs were tied except Blue Boy and Rambler. They would get the pleasure of fighting the coon that I wanted to eat.

I asked for one of the twenty-two rifles and was refused. We would talk the coon down out of the tree. Everybody started making weird sounds of what was their version of a coon's cry. Now that didn't fool me and I'm quite sure that coon in the very top of that tree wasn't misled very much. He did look down at all the commotion with interest, but he made no move to come down out of that tree.

Since they couldn't talk the coon out of the tree, John Page would go up and shake the coon out. Now I've heard tales and stories about people climbing trees, but believe me, I seen John Page climb that tree. I wasn't there to see the coon climb it, but I'll bet the coon didn't climb it any easier than John did. He reached the top of the tree and commenced to shake the limb where the coon

was. It didn't seem to upset the coon very much; he just got a tighter grip on his limb.

John moved a little farther out on the limb with the coon. The limb was swaying and bending with his weight. The coon got a bit nervous with his closeness and started still farther out on the limb -- and that was his mistake. When the coon moved, John gave a mighty shake and the coon fell. I didn't see the coon fall, I only heard it fall. I was too concerned about John. I was afraid that limb was going to break with him, but it didn't.

When I say I heard the coon fall, I actually heard him hit the ground. You take a twenty-pound coon and drop him into soggy quagmire that's running over the tops of my brogans, then it makes a loud whop. No sooner than the coon landed, Blue Boy was on the coon and I do believe had not Rambler come to the rescue, Blue Boy would have been the only split-lip hound in East Texas. That coon had Blue Boy by the upper lip and refused to let go.

The other dogs were straining on their leashes and bawling for a chance to get in on the fight while my coon was stretched out between Blue Boy and Rambler. Blue Boy had the coon by the head and Rambler had him by the hindquarters, pulling in opposite directions. I could hear bones breaking and joints separating and everybody was cheering the dogs on. All I could think of was those dogs were ruining some of the best barbecue meat one could wish for.

With this concern in mind, I stepped in to kick the dogs off of the dead coon that they were still fighting. It wasn't a popular thing to do, but I kicked at Blue Boy's head and you guessed it, I made my biggest mistake of the night. Blue Boy took no chances of whether the movement was a foot or another coon, and he took hold of my foot and commenced to growl and shake my foot like he shook that coon. By this time, everything was all out of proportion to me. I was observing all this laying on my back in six inches of mud and water, with the

knowledge that the pain in my foot was becoming unbearable.

Had it not been for John Page, Blue Boy would have probably removed my right foot. John calmly stepped in and caught hold of Blue Boy's collar and told him, "dead coon" and it was as if you had flipped a switch on that dog. He just sat down and looked at me laying there in the mud as if I were some kind of trophy to him.

Now my coon was mauled, torn, broken and muddy, but carry that coon I must, with aching feet and muddy overhauls eating at me in delicate places. I carried that coon back to the Bronco. I will admit that I broke my own rule. The first chance I got, I unloaded that coon from the hood of that Bronco.

We just reversed our trip back home, but by this time, I was too tired to take much interest in anything but how to stay on the hood of the Bronco -- and we made it back home. Looking back on this, I truly learned myself a good lesson; that being, bring your own gear, your own light, and don't kick Blue Boy in the head.

With all this in mind, I went out and purchased myself a coon dog and I'm waiting for the chance to repay some unknowing tenderfoot the same ecstasy I had the misfortune to endure that night.

## THE SHAWNEE CREEK WILD WOMAN

About halfway between Huntington and Zavalla on Highway 69, Shawnee Creek crosses the highway. In the old days, the old road was very narrow, built up on a dump, and the trees grew up over the road and formed what looked like a tunnel.

But a wild woman lived at Shawnee Creek. She became known as the Shawnee Creek Wild Woman. A truck driver first seen her, according to the reports in the Lufkin Daily News. He was coming through this dark -- and it was dark -- past midnight, and just as he started to cross Shawnee Creek Bridge, this wild woman stepped up on the

running board of his truck and rode to the other side of the bridge and stepped off. Now this wild woman was described by many, but this truck driver stopped in Lufkin and told the county sheriff that she had long, black hair that hung down to her ankles. She had flaming red eyes, and she had fingernails that were about six inches long.

Now if you can imagine somebody stepping up on the running board of a truck doing 50 miles an hour -- that was a fast woman! Now this article come out in the Lufkin Daily news, but it wasn't news to me -- I had already heard this story. Now I had never seen the wild woman, but she must have been there for as many people had reported her.

Now this story got started at Manning Cut Off, a little country grocery store that was owned by John Thomas. John Thomas was my step-dad, and he was about a buckle off and a couple miles slow. Well, we had living right across the road from us a young black boy by the name of Lewis, and he didn't say Lewis, he said, "Leris," and if John Thomas was about a buckle off and a mile or two slow, Leris was in a little worse shape than he was. Leris would come over there and set down in front of that store and John Thomas would tell him scary ghost tales and get him so scared up that he was afraid to walk back across the highway to his house, and I had heard the same story and I was just as scared as he was.

John Thomas sat there and told him that this wild woman lived in Shawnee Creek bottom. He described her with long, black hair, red eyes (could see in the dark) could run 70 miles an hour across that bridge, jump up on car fenders and ride across and step off on the other side. Leris, he didn't buy this. He didn't believe it was so. He told him there wasn't no such thing.

John Thomas told him that if he would go down there and walk down under the Shawnee Creek Bridge, dip him up a bucket of water out of the Shawnee Creek and write his name in the sand, that he'd

Country Store

give him $20. Course, this all had to be done after midnight. Now Leris, being 18-19 years old and big enough to whip a bear without a switch, he decided he'd take this up.

They set the day and the night, and Leris went down with his bucket, come creeping down that bank off the highway, bending over and looking up under that bridge -- and it's dark up under that bridge. He stood and looked for a few minutes and he didn't see nothing. He walked on down there and he bent over to dip that water up out of that creek.

Now John Thomas was up under that bridge with a quilt wrapped around him and as Leris stood up with that bucket of water, John Thomas started walking toward him, coming out from under the edge of that bridge. Now Shawnee Creek was at least 30 feet wide, and Leris crossed the creek and the water didn't splash. John Thomas walked back up

the road and got in his old pickup and come back to the store. But it was three days before Leris got back to the store and he didn't try to claim his $20 -- he had seen her!

Now the story had got started, and for many years after that, people would stop at that store after dark, get out and be plumb pale in the face, telling this wild story about how they was coming across the Shawnee Creek Bridge and had seen a wild woman. It had even clumb up on the running board of their car and rode across the Shawnee Creek Bridge.

## THE PSHAW MAN

There was a store at Manning Cut Off, five miles out of Huntington towards Zavaller (Zavalla), run by John Thomas. Now whatever you needed he had, but things didn't come in them days in pretty little packages and all the individual little sacks. Taters come in hundred-pound sacks; onions come in hundred-pound sacks. You had to empty these taters and onions out somewhere and put them on display and the people could buy them -- ever how many pounds they wanted.

Now John Thomas was better known as "Pshaw Man," cause everything he said was "Pshaw!" Pshaw Man had a display table settin' right in the double doors of this little store. You had to step up about a foot to walk inside, and the first thing you seen was these taters and onions on the display table. This display table had a bin on top about four or five foot wide and about eight inches deep, and it was full of taters. There was bout a two-foot gap in between them, and there was a bin down on the bottom that had a hundred pounds of onions in it, and when you walked in that store the first thing you got was a nice aroma of onions and taters, if that's nice.

Well, one night Leris was over there setting on the porch, listening to these scary ghost tales, gettin' all worked up to where he'd be `fraid to walk home by himself, and a transformer or the

power pole for the electricity to that store caught on fire. It was shooting out little sparks -- looked like a Christmas time sparkler for the first few minutes. And then it got to shooting them sparks a little more readily, a little more heavier and a little more often, and Pshaw Man got to settin' there telling Leris that that transformer was going to blow wide open, right on top of that pole, and this went on for about 30 or 45 minutes. That transformer would spurt little spouts of fire out into the air. Pshaw Man would holler: "Look out, Leris" and Leris would jump.

Directly this transformer blew up. The top of that power pole looked like a mangled toothpick -- and Leris was setting in the front door of that store. And it scared him -- it scared him bad. He jumped up and he run into that store. But when that power pole blowed the top off, the light went out, and you ain't never heard the racket and commotion that was going on in that store. Leris ran in that store and he hung his toe and didn't quite make that step and he was bent over but he went in that door, and when he straightened up he had that table on that had a hundred pounds of taters and a hundred pounds of onions in it.

He commenced throwing taters and onions all over that store, whirling around and fighting at that table, trying to get out from underneath it. He turned over three cases of sody-water; turned over the Mother's cookie jar; rattled the candy counter and played general havoc at that store.

Now it was some hour and a half before Texas Power and Light Company got a truck down there. They had to set a new pole, put the wires back together and put a new transformer on it. But as everybody did, we had kerosene lamps, and before all the electricity got fixed and turned back on, we had lit them kerosene lamps and we was still pickin' up taters and onions and straightening up the candy counter and sortin' out sody-water after the power company had got the pole fixed.

# Ghost Stories

Ghost stories have been told for many years. They are an East Texas tradition. Many people tell ghost stories for entertainment. Some are passed down from generation to generation and become family favorites. Friends and neighbors in our community have shared some of their favorite ghost stories with us and we in return would like to share them with you! Howard Teer, a student at Gary, did the fine illustrations which accompany the stories.

Mary Wysong

At the time I was working on a farm. My boss had a mean cat. He really hated it. He told me to take it off, but the next morning the cat was back. It made me and my boss even more mad. He told me to take the cat really far off this time, and I did. The next morning the cat came back. I repeated this again but I took the cat even farther than before. The cat came back again. This time the farmer told me to take it really, really far away and cut its head off and I did. The next morning I saw the cat and its head on the porch.

James Pierce

I heard this ghost story from my step-father and he claims it is very true.

When I was a young boy, my brother and I slept in the same bed. My sister had too much to eat and drink one night and had a terrible nightmare. She got a whipping, a bad one. I don't know why but she did.

One night my brother and I were lying in the bed, and I heard a loud noise. I looked up and saw two pairs of eyeballs. They were floating across the room about four feet from the floor. I got really scared and instantly covered my head with the blanket. I waited for about two or three minutes, then I pulled the covers back down. You'll never guess what I saw. The eyeballs at this time were about two inches from my own. I covered my eyes again for a minute or so. All of a sudden I felt the bed sink as if someone had sat down on the edge of it. I looked to see who it was, but no one was there. By this time I was terrified out of my wits. I covered my eyes again for about five minutes. I then looked around again. The eyes were gone.

I heard something in the living room. I guess I went crazy. I got up to go look. In the middle of the living room sat the rocking chair. It was rocking on its own. I glanced up and saw the figure of a man through the window in our door. I ran back to my room and never went to sleep that night. I didn't tell anyone the next day what had happened because of the incident about my sister's nightmare.

My brother said he didn't remember anything. Maybe the noise didn't wake him. I think it could have been my grandparents, but I'll never know.

James Brasher

A man was driving along on an old country road one night. The air was misty and foggy, and

a little on the cold side. He turned a steep curve and saw a little girl no more than twelve years old standing on the side of the road. He pulled over and said, "Do you live around here?" The little girl nodded her head. The man asked if she wanted a ride. She replied with a jumpy, "Yes!" He got out of the car to open the door for the little girl and noticed that she was wearing old clothes like they wore ten years ago. He got in and he started driving down the road. He asked where about did she live. She said, "About three miles from here." The man thought this girl was very odd.

They finally reached her house and she said, "Stop there." He pulled up to the driveway, got out of the car, and opened the door. He said, "We are here." No one came out. He looked in the back seat and saw it was empty. He thought to himself, "Where could she have gone?" About that time the porch light came on at the house. A fat woman came out the door. The man explained that he had picked up a little girl on the side of the road, and she said she lived here. The lady smiled and said, "Thank you for bringing my little girl, Mary, nome." The man looked puzzled. The fat woman explained that thirteen years ago her little girl, Mary, had been run over about three miles down the road. She said a year ago this night another man came to bring Mary home too. Twelve others within the thirteen years had also done the same thing!

Landy Ritter

In the early 1900's there was a family that lived in the Lake Murvaul area. The tale was told about a lady, a kind of strange looking lady, sort of quiet and withdrawn. She kept to herself and didn't like to go around other people that much. Some people said they weren't exactly sure when, but one day her mind just snapped. And one rainy night she brutally chopped her husband's head open

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with an ax.

Four years after she killed her husband, people said that she could still be seen looking for her husband's head. But as people approached her she seemed to shrink back. It was almost like she had disappeared. But you could hear her calling her husband. Shortly thereafter the house that she and her husband lived in burned up, leaving her homeless and desperately alone.

A few years later she died by drowning in the lake. So even to this very day, some people say that she haunts the waters of Lake Murvaul. It is also said that a light crosses the lake and then suddenly disappears. Some people say that it is her carrying the light and looking for her husband's head.

Gladys Lambert

When we were just married my husband and I moved in with a widow lady. Her husband had died three months before. We had been out one night and came home to go to bed to get some sleep. I was already in bed and my husband was standing by the dresser finishing a cigarette, then all of a sudden the door came open very slowly. My husband looked out in the hall, shut the door, and turned the key in the lock. He walked to the bed, then the key clicked in the lock and the door came open again.

The widow lady was not home so my husband went through every room in the house, but found nothing. He came back to our room and again locked the door and put a chair under the doorknob. This time it didn't come open. The lady told us that we were sleeping in the room her husband had stayed in. She said that she had seen her dead husband many times during the evening when we were gone. She said he would smile at her and then disappear.

Gladys Lambert

Many years ago, there was a story going around about an old haunted house on the outskirts of Carthage. Nobody would live there because of the rumor. However, there were two young men who said they did not believe in ghosts and agreed to go and stay in the house. They sat around all evening and nothing happened. Just as the clock struck midnight, they heard clanking coming from the stairs. They looked up and saw what appeared to be a pirate carrying a sword. The figure motioned for them to follow him. They were too scared to move. Nothing else happened that night. The next day the two young men decided they would follow the figure that night. That night was again quiet all evening. Then at midnight the same thing happened as the night before. The figure came down the stairs and motioned the young men to follow, which they did. They followed upstairs, and then to the attic. The pirate went to one end of it and hit the wall with the sword and disappeared again. The next morning the young men went to the attic and broke through the wall where the figure had hit it with the sword. They found a large box filled with coins and jewels, which they turned over to the government. The house was never haunted again.

Roy Jeffers

Once upon a time there was a young married couple just starting their lives together. They bought 150 acres of land that was covered with timber. They worked together clearing a home spot and in building a log cabin. They worked from dawn to dark, clearing pasture land and building fences, with dreams of one day having cattle and a garden. Mary and William had no near neighbors, so they never saw anyone but each other. About every three months they would hitch up the team of

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mules and make that long slow trip to town to get groceries and supplies. They'd sell what skins and vegetables and quilts they might be able to gather, make, or grow, and try to get by.

Well, Mary was not from here so people didn't know much about her. The rumor was that she was from a very wealthy family. On their wedding day, William was given a dowry which amounted to a large sum of money. This rumor was just that, a rumor. But because they didn't have any close neighbors or friends, most people believed the rumor.

One night in January the ground was covered with a deep blanket of snow and the temperature was very cold. In the cabin a large fire was crackling, a big pot of stew was boiling, and William and Mary were warm and happy in their world. They were unaware their world was about to become a nightmare.

On this very night there was a knock at their door. Opening the door was a big mistake for William and Mary. At the door were four strangers who days earlier heard the rumor in town about the dowry.

William and Mary knew a dowry did not exist, but the strangers could not be convinced. Mary watched as the men murdered her beloved William, leaving her alive just long enough to see if she would give up the dowry to save her own life. But the men soon saw that Mary's life didn't mean anything to her without her William, so she too was put to death. The men were so angry about her silence that they cut Mary's head off and buried it away from her body. They set fire to the log cabin and rode out of sight, sorry for not finding the dowry.

Many years passed after the death of William and Mary and the land remained ownerless. No one would ever live there again, because it was believed that a woman goes across the land carrying her head in her hands and making loud moans for William.

On snow covered nights the moans are the loudest. Some people would go to live there but all would come back with the same story, a woman was there crying for her beloved William.

Katherine Stickle

It was January 2, 1932, when Mr. Bradmen stepped in the door and yelled, "Honey, I'm home!" She came down the stairs with a double barrel shotgun in her hands. He yelled, "No!" just as the shotgun rang off.

Three years later, a realtor had been showing the house to a couple. The man asked, "What's this red spot at the end of the stairs?" The realtor hesitated and commented, "Just some food coloring the last owners spilt." The man kneeled at the edge of the spot and ran his finger across it. He lifted it up and blood was dripping from his index finger. His wife screamed. He wiped it on his pants, left the house, and began spreading rumors that the house was haunted.

It was 1963, when the house was finally sold to a woman named Katherine Stickle. She also had wondered about the red spot. One day when the children were at school she decided to wash it out of the rug. She got a pail of hot water and got a rag and scrubbed the spot. She wrung the rag out and it was dripping blood. She did it again and the same thing happened again. She did this for an hour and it still wrung out red as blood. The family moved out and to this day the house is vacant.

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